



Maryland  
Hospital Association

March 23, 2023

To: The Honorable Melony G. Griffith, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 1146- Maryland Department of Health and Maryland Health Care Commission- Dental Services- Survey and Regional Needs Assessment

Dear Chair Griffith:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 1146, as amended by the House. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many disruptions in the health care system, including increased acuity due to patients deferring care and requirements to halt scheduled, non-emergent procedures (also referred to as "elective"). Hospitals are working to address these backlogs in care. This includes an increased need for operating room space for complicated dental cases that required general anesthesia, particularly for pediatric patients.

Currently, about half of Maryland's hospitals provide operating room time and staff for dental procedures scheduled by community dentists—with over 6,500 procedures performed annually. Virtually all hospitals have block scheduling availability for these procedures, and the two that do not offer block time work with dentists to schedule their cases. None of these hospitals have stopped providing OR time or staff and all remain committed to providing ongoing access for this critical need. We do recognize, however, that immediate steps were needed to support these patients.

Since being made aware of the waiting lists from community dentists, hospitals increased OR availability. For example, a hospital in Western Maryland agreed to accommodate any dentist who would need space and was able to credential and onboard a dentist at that hospital. Another hospital in Baltimore County that does not have equipment to accommodate dental procedures is looking to procure the proper tools, and in Howard County, Baltimore County, and Baltimore City, hospitals are credentialing and privileging additional dentists. MHA worked closely with the Maryland State Dental Association to connect dentists and hospital leadership to discuss waitlists and identify opportunities to schedule procedures. This is progress, and it will continue. However, we need a sustainable, data informed plan to ensure access long-term across the state, regardless of whether that access is in a hospital setting or ambulatory surgery center.

MHA collaborated with the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Health Care Commission to develop amendments adopted by the House in HB 1146. The amendments establish a process to look at regional data and capacity on a regional basis and develop targeted plans for each area of the state. The report will also analyze subsidies provided by hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers to anesthesiologists. This approach will enable MDH to develop a plan to ensure access to every Marylander to needed OR space for dental procedures. MHA and

our hospitals are committed to partnering over the interim to advance this work and identify long-term solutions.

MHA appreciates the leadership of House Health & Government Operations Chair Joseline Peña-Melnyk, who brought stakeholders together throughout session to work through this complex but important issue, as well as Delegate Nic Kipke for his sponsorship of this legislation.

For more information, please contact:

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